

WASTE AND FOUND OBJECTS AS POTENT CREATIVE RESOURCES: A REVIEW OF THE ART IS EVERYWHERE PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

Art is a continuum comprising a plethora of styles, techniques and media. In the search for creative fulfillment, the artist has consistently explored the environment as a useful source of ideas and materials. As integral components of the environment, waste and found objects have been appropriated in art production by numerous artists as potent creative resources. Given the growing global concerns on environmental degradation and climate change, the transformation of waste and found objects into works of art imbued with new meaning, function and value, is an important avenue to creating a sustainable environment. Furthermore, waste-to-art initiatives have other derivable benefits. This essay reviews the activities of the Art is Everywhere (AIE) Project, a waste-to-art initiative that not only creates awareness on the viability of waste and found objects as potent creative resources, but also facilitates its practical engagement. Historical, narrative and analytical approaches were adopted. Textual and visual materials were used to examine the activities of the Art is Everywhere Project. The challenges facing the AIE Project were also discussed as well as the prospects. The use of waste and found objects as creative resources is a viable method of waste management. In addition to encouraging entrepreneurship and income generation, it also provides new aesthetic windows for visual engagement.

KEYWORDS: Art is Everywhere Project, Found Objects, Waste

INTRODUCTION

Transforming waste and found objects into works of art not only shows the boundless power of the human imagination, it also exposes the innate creative potentials that such materials possess. Waste and found objects are integral components of the environment. They exist in diverse forms and are either man-made or naturally occurring. They could also be classified as degradable or non-degradable materials. Although the concept of waste and found objects is usually viewed using different interpretative filters, both terms can be used interchangeably to describe certain objects depending on contexts of personalized viewpoints, function, value and geographical placement. Of the two, waste commands a much more global attention as a result of its role in environmental degradation. Growing concerns on climate change have made waste generation and management a very topical issue. Processes like reclamation, recycling, re-processing and up-cycling, constitute ways of managing waste.

In the visual arts, waste and found objects have featured prominently in art production. Profound explorations and experimentations with these materials have been carried out by various artists as a potent means of self expression. In the early 20th century, Western artists like Marcel Duchamp and Pablo Picasso appropriated found objects as creative devices. Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) and Pablo Picasso's *Still Life with Chair Caning* (1912) are good examples. In Africa, various artists have critically engaged waste and found objects as viable media for artistic expression. The internationally renowned African sculptor, El Anatsui, has made profound visual statements using discarded bottle tops, disused mortars

and derelict house posts.. Dilomprizulike, also known as the ‘Junkman from Africa’, is another artist who has made significant creative strides in the appropriation of wastes and found objects as compositional tools. According to Offoedu-Okeke (2012), “his art exists within a discourse of utility and waste. (p. 480). He further adds:

For Dilomprizulike, excavating a rubbish heap of trashed building materials, disused furniture, useless electronic gadgets and rags makes it possible to reinvent their life histories while assigning them new aesthetic roles and functions. (p. 480)

The same can be said of other artists whose works utilize waste or found objects as the principal creative medium. One can also argue that the rationale for this contextual reading into works of art that incorporate waste or found objects as compositional elements is hinged on the peculiar formalism which usually characterizes such works. Again, what the above statement infers is that artistic inspiration can come from unexpected places and with the most unlikely objects and materials. If one relies on the premise that ‘art is a function of the environment’, it then follows that the artist is constantly confronted with diverse existential variables which impact significantly on his creative sensibility. In addition to conflating multiplicity of life experiences, the environment is an invaluable source of material resources that can be artistically exploited by a perceptive and creative mind. While the mind ponders on the relationship between art and the environment, one may ask, if not from the environment, where else would the artist source materials for creative fulfillment?

As integral components of the environment, waste and found objects have elicited creative inquiries from artists. On a humanistic level, the appropriation of waste and found objects as compositional tools in art production can be used to examine man’s interaction with the environment. Again, these materials, when re-contextualized into works of art, can serve utilitarian and economic purposes. They also imbue art works with a peculiar aesthetics which make for edifying and profound visual statements. Furthermore, its practical application encourages entrepreneurship and also provides job opportunities. In spite of these obvious potentials, the culture of transforming waste to art is yet to be adequately explored by Nigerian visual artists. Artists, who have engaged waste and found objects as a creative resource, have done so as personal studio explorations. Collaboration in this regard, especially through workshop experiences, is yet to gain significant foothold in the creative dynamics of modern Nigerian art. It is in the light of the views expressed above that this paper reviews the activities of the Art is Everywhere Project (AIE), a waste-to-art initiative which not only creates awareness on the viability of waste and found objects as potent creative resources, but also facilitates its practical engagement.

Waste, Found Objects and the Art is Everywhere Project: A Brief Overview

What constitutes waste is subject to various interpretations. Odoja, Makinde, Ajiboye and Fajuyigbe (2013) have expressed the view that “Generally, waste or junks are considered to be any useless, discarded materials that are no longer good enough to be kept and therefore need to be disposed as unwanted” (p. 1). From a geographical context, any material, regardless of its value and function, found in a location where these qualities are considered irrelevant and undesirable, can also be viewed as waste. Generation of waste materials to a substantial degree is linked to existential concepts like modernization. Advancement in technology has initiated phenomenal increase in the production and consumption of goods and services. Huge varieties of waste are generated in the process. It is arguable that each culture generates waste peculiar to its lifestyle. This led Obeagu (2007) to conclude that “one place where the character of most cities can be felt is in the waste” (p. 23).

Various descriptive terminologies such as debris, rejects, rejected elements, trash and junks, have been used to interpret waste (Odoja et al, 2013). What constitutes waste from one ideological position may be interpreted differently from another viewpoint. Odoja et al also proffered that “junk is a phenomenal ideation: what one calls junk or waste becomes a junk” (p.1). Even though this view confers interpretative authority on the individual rather than on collective reasoning, this, however, does not exclude the possibility of a personal enunciation attracting collective endorsement. From whichever viewpoint waste is perceived or engaged, it does not foreclose the possibility of re-processing it into new materials imbued with new meaning, function, value and aesthetics.

Unlike waste, found objects have had a long standing association with the visual arts. The term ‘Found object’ is said to have originated from the French word *objet trouvé* and describes “objects or products with non-art functions that are placed into an art context and made part of an artwork” (Wallace, 2014, n.p). Even though these objects are often modified, they still retain much of their original identity. Works of art incorporating found objects are usually imbued with an expressive power that can be deeply involving as a result of its ability to project dual interpretative contexts. Marcel Duchamp’s so called ‘readymade’ sculptures popularized found objects in the early 20th century. In stating Duchamp’s view on the works, Kleiner (2009) noted that the artist was of the opinion that the ‘readymades’ “was free from any consideration of either good or bad taste, qualities shaped by a society he and other Dada artists found aesthetically bankrupt” (p. 930). Kleiner further remarked that “The “art” of this “artwork” lies in the artist’s choice of objects, which has the effect of conferring the status of art on it and forces the viewer to see the object in a new light” (p. 930). In the re-contextualized form, the original function or intent of the found object is either subtly or forcefully projected alongside that of its new intended meaning. Simply put, found objects are contextualized as art based on the designation placed upon them by the artist and also from the historical baggage that comes with the object.

The engagement of waste and found objects as potent creative resources forms the primary area of interest of the Art is Everywhere Project, a waste-to-art initiative established in 2005 by a Nigerian artist, Ayo Adewunmi, in collaboration with the Alliance Francaise Centre, Enugu, in south east Nigeria. The idea for the AIE Project was conceived during the study tour programme of the Pan African Circle of Artists (PACA) in January 2004 which took 24 artists, including Adewunmi, around six West African countries (Adewunmi, 2005). Having experienced firsthand, the enormous creative possibilities inherent in converting local materials, especially waste, to worthwhile works of art, he conceived the idea of the need to organize a workshop in Nigeria aimed at creating awareness on the culture of recycling. According to Adewunmi:

The need to have a workshop on recycled objects was further enhanced when we visited the *village Artisanal* (Craft Village) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The physically challenged are trained and allocated spaces where they make a living from craft, which are sold mostly to tourists...We have a need for such effective places here in Nigeria. (p.1)

In the spirit of readiness to experiment with nearly any new material the environment can offer for studio practice in the visual arts, various objectives were articulated to guide the activities of AIE Project. In enunciating the objectives, Adewunmi (2008) stated:

The project objectives include rediscovering wastes as a source for artistic creation thereby drawing attention to environmental issues; providing an avenue to train younger artists and the less privileged in the society on how to make a living from recycling and creation of cultural exchanges between local and foreign artists. (4)

The AIE Project commenced formal activities in 2005 when it held the first edition of its waste-to-art workshop and exhibition. Over the years, various workshops, lectures and exhibitions have been organized in various parts of Nigeria. These events have been used as platforms for the actualization of its set objectives by acting as a commune of creative minds whose collective interest revolves round the appropriation of waste and found objects sourced from the environment as its primary creative media. Inter-cultural exchanges have also been explored by the Art is Everywhere Project through the involvement of foreign artists, especially from other African countries, to participate in some of the workshops. Various areas of creative interest such as painting, sculpture, installation, metal work, casting and craft making, have been used in engaging waste and found objects as viable creative resources. Students, upcoming artists, untrained artists and professional artists, form the fulcrum on which the activity of the Art is Everywhere Project rests.

Review of Activities of the AIE Project

The maiden edition of the workshop took place at the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria, between May and April, 2005. Nine students from the Department of Fine and Applied Arts of the Institution participated in the workshop. One project coordinator and two workshop instructors facilitated the workshop which lasted for four days and was divided into two sessions, material sourcing and practical session. The first day which was dedicated to the collection of materials was also used by the participants to “interact conceptually and understand the mannerism, so to say, of their chosen media” (Nzewi, 2005, p. 2). The remaining three days were devoted to the creative engagement of media. Nzewi equally described the criterion for choosing the participants as well as the nature of the workshop itself:

With respect to the students, they were picked to participate based on their individual performances in a particular academic course. The nine of them explored ideas that were environmental, nature, industrial and time based. And of course, some of the works produced have a degree of permanence. But above all, the exercise is an ongoing process with a proclivity that could be astute, well rounded, developmental and visionary geared towards attaining a certain level of technical productivity in the nearest future if it is sustained. (p. 2)

Varieties of materials were explored in the workshop such as wood, snail shells, discarded tins, plastics, egg shells, synthetic fibres, bottle tops, stones, oil bean pods, and bamboo, all sourced from the environment. The important role played by the environment in the creative process cannot be over emphasized. What it offers for the sustenance and enhancement of art and artistic experimentation transcends beyond unprocessed natural materials to include synthetic products some of which may have satisfied their primary function leaving behind by-products. The real challenge for the artist also goes beyond having the predilection to tap into this rich fountain of creative resource, it entails having the perceptive ability to choose and develop ideas at the expense of others and also to source appropriate materials for its visual justification. The works exhibited at the end of the workshop showed the peculiar manner in which the participants responded to these creative challenges. These included objects of high utilitarian and aesthetic value. Equally highlighted, is the creative inventiveness exhibited by the participants in re-contextualizing common-place items into new forms imbued with new meaning, value and function. The artist is therefore projected as a resourceful person who, through a natural instinct towards improvisation, deciphers innovative ways of putting waste to creative use.



Plate 1: Queen Mbadiwe, Coconut Bags, Coconut Shell, Bead, Rope and Synthetic Fibre © Art is Everywhere Project



Plate 2: Charles Achibi, City, Discarded Circuit Boards, Bottle Tops, Recharge Card, Product Packages, Plastic, and Measuring Tape © Art is Everywhere Project

In 2006 and 2007, the second and third workshops also held in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Institute of Management and Technology, (I. M. T), Enugu. One significant difference between the two workshops and the first edition is the increase in the number of participants. As against the nine participants that featured in the 2005 workshop, twenty participants were recorded in 2006 while the number increased to thirty in 2007. Another observable difference had to do with the status of the participants as well as the number of instructors that facilitated the workshop. Trained and untrained artists formed the core of the participants in 2006 while that of 2007 comprised art students and art teachers with five assistant instructors and five chief instructors acting as workshop facilitators. Various materials like wood, bottle top, recycled paper and bamboo, were explored. Others include coconut shells, leather, sponge fibre, beads and glass. These materials were used to produce art works of high aesthetic and utilitarian value. Examples are shown in Plates 1 and 2.

The fourth and fifth workshops (*Art is Everywhere 4* and *Art is Everywhere 5*) held in November 2007. In line with its objective to explore waste peculiar to different environments, the workshops were held in the cities of Jos and Kaduna in the northern region of Nigeria. This afforded people from the two cities the opportunity to participate in the waste-to-art initiative and in the process, engage waste materials and found objects peculiar to their respective

environments. Fifteen participants registered for the Jos workshop. Ten participants from Enugu also joined, bringing the total to twenty-five. Three participants from Jos were secondary school students. Their inclusion was informed by the need to create early awareness in the minds of younger or aspiring artists on the need to inculcate the culture of transforming waste to art (Adewunmi, 2007). In order to make the workshop very effective, participants were divided into four groups each headed by an instructor. Four areas of creative interest (fashion accessories, wood/metal work, paper recycling and mixed media exploration) were mapped out and each group was made to explore a particular area. Grass, tin sand, seeds, wire, fabric, beads, leaves, recycled paper and rock were some of the materials engaged in the workshop. These materials were used to produce paintings, installations, sculptures, decorative cards and crafts. Three lectures were delivered in the Jos workshop on mixed media, fabric pieces as a waste to art material, and finishing.

The Kaduna workshop involved fourteen participants, six instructors, three art teachers and four secondary school students. Three lectures were also delivered in the course of the workshop. Various materials sourced from the environment were creatively explored and appropriated as design elements. Some of these materials include palm flower, palm frond, sponge fibre, metal, wood, cow horn and paper. Others are calabash, pieces of fabric, stone, sand, bone, plastic, bead, nuts, and slippers, among others. In the work *Fulani Maid*, palm branch, calabash, jute rope, metal nuts and cow teeth have been ingeniously combined to depict a Fulani maiden carrying a calabash on her head. In *Struggle*, (Plate 7), similar materials have also been artistically used to conceptualize a fisherman paddling a boat. The innate attributes of the palm branch were creatively exploited in both pieces. The Jos and Kaduna workshops as well as other workshops previously organized by the Art is Everywhere made efforts at projecting art into the public space and consciousness. As rightly observed by Buhari (2007):

These types of fundamental projects are imperatives for a truly cultural synthesis. It is also these same types of initiatives that will make art a sustainable cultural activity where all are informed and carried along for mass positive action. The truly global village requires these ideas. (p. 4)



Plate 3: Participants in One of the Workshops © Art is Everywhere Project



Plate 4: Sourcing for Materials from a Refuse Dump. © Art is Everywhere Project



Plate 5: Participants in One of the Lectures © Art is Everywhere Project



Plate 6: Practical Session in One of the Workshops. © Art is Everywhere Project

Subsequent workshops organized by the Art is Everywhere Project basically followed the same pattern adopted in previous workshops which had material sourcing, practical session, lectures and exhibition of works produced in the workshop as its major activities. However, the seventh and tenth workshops held in 2008 and 2009 at Abuja and Zaria respectively, were organized on a much more expansive scale. These workshops were planned as a forum for artistic exchange between foreign and local artists. In the 2008 workshop, five artists from five different African countries were in attendance. They are Phiri Rabson (Zambia), Akwelle Suma Glory (Ghana), Enyo Dackey (Togo), Henry Mujunga (Uganda) and Ablefonlin Francois (Benin Republic). Excluding the foreign artists, “about thirty-four participants and resource persons took part in the workshop” (Adewunmi, 2008, p. 4). The presence of the foreign artists added a new dimension to the workshop proceedings. Lectures were delivered by these artists on the culture of recycling waste in their respective countries. Another lecture on glass slumping was also delivered by a local artist during the workshop. Over eighty works were produced at the end of the workshop and these were subsequently showcased at the closing exhibition. The 2009 workshop featured seven foreign artists from Gambia, Togo, Benin Republic and Senegal. Over fifty participants took part in the Zaria workshop (<http://www.artiseverywhere.com>). Insightful lectures were also delivered by some of the visiting foreign artists as well as their local counterparts.

Such collaborative work between foreign and local artists has its derivable benefits which include the exchange of ideas, experiences as well as exposure to certain tools and techniques. The creative engagement of waste and found objects in the two workshops yielded interesting visual outcomes. For instance, in the mixed media work *Finding Self through Refuse* (Plate 8), Henry Mujunga, the Ugandan artist, used waste as a literal and conceptual device to address issues of identity. Carton paper, multi-coloured paper, cloth, wood, dye and glue constitute the media employed by the artist. Pictorially, the painting depicts a portrait shot of a figure carrying a basket of refuse on its head. Various recognizable and abstract forms depicted within rectangular structures of different sizes surround the figure. Thematically, the work alludes to the significance and centrality of waste to human existence.

In Alice Vosuahi Aboderin's *Communal Dialogue* (Plate 9), discarded fabric, enamel and glue constitute the major compositional devices. Thematically, the work emphasizes the importance of dialogue as a pre-requisite for peaceful co-existence. The artist exploited the innate attributes of different fabric materials to evoke imageries relevant to the theme. The fabrics were cut into rectangular shapes and arranged side by side in horizontal and vertical formats to create an interesting pattern. Enamel paint was used in a stitch-like manner to hem the edges of these rectangular shapes. Enamel was also selectively applied on parts of the fabric to enhance its colouration. A dark motif in one of the fabric materials which looks like an abstract human figure was also exploited by the artist. The part of the fabric where this form appeared is used repeatedly, sometimes in an upright, sideways and upside down position to simulate human interaction. In the installation piece shown in Plate 10, the artist used pieces of firewood and wire to conceptualize three goats grazing in the field. The unique formalism of the work imbues it with an expressive power that is highly evocative and aesthetically alluring.



Plate 7: Lebechi Okochaeze, Struggle, Palm Branch, Wood, Jute Rope, Metal and Bone © Art is Everywhere Project



Plate 8: Henry Mujunga, Finding Self Through Refuse, Carton Paper, Multi-Coloured Paper, Cloth, Wood, Dye and Glue. © Art is Everywhere Project



Plate 9: Alice Vosuahi Aboderin, Communal Dialogue, Discarded Fabric, Enamel and Glue © Art is Everywhere Project



Plate 10: Installation, Pieces of Firewood and Metal Wire © Art is Everywhere Project

Challenges and Prospects

Funding and sponsorship constitute major challenges facing the Art is Everywhere Project (Adewunmi, 2007). The planning and logistics involved in organizing workshops, lectures and exhibitions which form the core activities of the Project require finance. Areas which involve finance include the use of the electronic and print media to disseminate information on the workshop; provision of adequate workshop materials and tools; securing of workshop and exhibition venues as well as catering for the needs of the participants and facilitators in terms of feeding and accommodation. In the 2007 workshop held in Kaduna, Adewunmi identified shortage of materials and tools as one of the challenges encountered during the course of the workshop. So far, the Project has relied on personal sacrifices on the part of the organizers, as well as the goodwill it has attracted from private and public institutions, to carry out its functions. The Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, Alliance Francaise Centre in Enugu, Jos and Kaduna, the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, Protea Hotel Nike Lake Resort, Enugu, Seven-Up Bottling Company and the Enugu State Waste Management Board, have all offered assistance to the Project in one way or the other. For instance, the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development provided sponsorship to cover the participation of six foreign artists, publicity, as well as the production of the catalogue for the *Art is Everywhere 7 Workshop and Exhibition* held at Abuja in 2008.

To overcome the challenges posed by inadequate funds, organizers of the Project, as a matter of priority, should devise effective strategies to source for funds. At present, the level of government involvement in its activities is low considering the fact that managing waste, which is central to the Project's activities, is a global issue. One would have expected that the Nigerian government, especially at the local, state and federal levels, should, as a matter of moral obligation and civic responsibility, partner with the Art is Everywhere Project in its waste-to-art initiatives. More so, they

have the financial and infrastructural capacity to contribute meaningfully in this regard. Funds and logistic support should also be solicited from other establishments in the private sector who understand and appreciate the need to create a sustainable environment.

Issues affecting health also pose a serious challenge to the Art is Everywhere Project. Certain refuse or waste, by their very nature, is potential habitat for all sorts of bacteria. Also, depending on their chemical structures, some waste can be toxic and therefore injurious to health if not carefully handled. From another perspective, the process of re-contextualizing the physical structure of materials can also cause health hazards. For instance, applying heat to plastics produces toxic fumes which can cause respiratory illness. Scavenging refuse bins or dumps also poses serious health risks. In addition to the unhealthy nature of the stench emanating from decomposing organic materials, pieces of broken bottles, glass and other sharp objects can equally cause grievous bodily harm. In view of this, one may ask, Are the organizers of the Art is Everywhere Workshops aware of these health challenges? What precautions or procedures have been put in place to minimize health hazards associated with handling waste? The conspicuous absence of health related programmes in its activities suggests that this area has been overlooked. As a preventive measure, the use of protective gear like hand gloves, boots and nose masks should be introduced in subsequent workshops. In addition, knowledgeable professionals in the health and waste management sectors should be involved in the activities of AIE Project in order to educate participants on best international practices in handling waste.

The level of art appreciation in Nigeria is another challenge confronting the Art is Everywhere Project. An artistically informed society to a reasonable degree understands the dynamics which circumscribe the creative process and as such exhibits a more profound appreciation of the scope, nature, variety and thematic content which characterize works of art. Conversely, a society that cannot grasp the fundamental precepts of art making cannot engage on a deeper level, the essence, function, value and aesthetic components embodied in works of art. Considered generally, the level of art appreciation in Nigeria is still low. The views expressed by Buhari (2007) highlights this shortcoming:

In the university, for example, where I have taught for over a period of 26 years, very serious academic colleagues have, in an art exhibition looked at a ceramic vase with keen observation and called it a good drawing. If there is such a level of ignorance in a university, what do you expect from the general public? (p. 4)

Oloidi (2011) blames this development to the attitude of the colonial administrators and Christian missionaries to art during the colonial era in Nigeria. He also recounted the resultant effect which this had on the psyche of the Nigerian people:

Art was viewed as having no insurance for the future; talk less of seeing it as alimentary to the development of a nation. The society's highly insipid and insinuating opinion of art also, unfortunately, seemed though temporarily, to give art no alternative than to be weakly amenable to their environmental acquired art illiteracy. (pp. 22 - 23)

If the level of appreciation and understanding of art by the Nigerian public is applied within the conceptual framework of the Art is Everywhere Project, it is obvious that a lot still needs to be done in order to effectively realize the set objectives of its waste-to-art initiatives. Seen from another viewpoint, in addition to other socio-economic, political and cultural factors, art patronage can also be either positively or negatively affected by the level of art appreciation and understanding of a given society. Since wealth generation constitutes one of the cardinal objectives of the Art is Everywhere Project, effort should be made to re-assess the strategies already adopted by the organizers of the project. It is

recommended that lectures on art appreciation should be organized periodically independent of the workshops. Venues which facilitate more public participation and interaction should be identified and considered when organizing future workshops and exhibitions. Also, using art exhibitions which is time bound as the major platform for showcasing the works produced in the workshops will definitely impact on the visibility, accessibility and availability of these works to the general public. Effort should be made to have these works on permanent display so as to increase the chances of sales.

Other challenges confronting AIE Project border on gender imbalance and security. Female participation in the workshops, especially the Kaduna workshop held in 2007, was abysmally low. Only one female participant registered for the workshop but later withdrew on health grounds (Adewunmi, 2007). Adewunmi also concluded that “Lack of female participants at the Kaduna workshop is a reflection of the low involvement of females from that part of the country in contemporary art practice” (p. 75). Religious belief prevalent in the northern region of Nigeria which discourages the production of certain types of art may also have contributed to the low female attendance. One way of checking this imbalance is the involvement of more female participants in the workshops organized in areas with a much more liberal mindset. The threat posed by security challenges in Nigeria as a result of the Boko Haram insurgency cannot be overlooked. Irrespective of the mobile nature of the workshop which is aimed at exploring the creative potentials of waste peculiar to different environments in Nigeria, safety concerns will undoubtedly affect the prospects of holding workshops in certain northern cities that are considered prone to violent attacks by the insurgents.

Based on the antecedents of the Art is Everywhere Project, it is obvious that significant strides have been made towards actualizing its set objectives. The exponential increase in the number of participants to the workshops suggests that more people have become convinced of the inherent creative, environmental and economic benefits derivable from imbibing the culture of transforming waste to art. If it is effectively and efficiently managed, the future of the Art is Everywhere Project looks bright. It has the capacity to contribute meaningfully to national development. However, to actualize this, it needs to constantly re-evaluate its activities and if the need arises, develop and adopt new strategies that will enhance its service delivery. Having shown consistency in organizing and conducting annual workshops and exhibitions based on its waste-to-art initiatives, the chances of attracting more beneficial partnerships from both the private and public sectors are high.

Establishing such partnerships has its obvious advantages. The Art is Everywhere Project will be better empowered to effectively deal with the challenges confronting it. Again, this will also enable it to expand the scope and scale of its activities. What this infers is the possibility of transforming the workshop into a national event that can be replicated at the local and state levels in order to reach a wider audience; the diversification of the content of the Project’s activities to include seminars and conferences where experts in the health, economic and environmental sectors will be invited to give lectures; the capacity to pursue a vigorous art exchange and collaborative programme with other African and Western countries and the capability to establish and run a gallery where works produced during the workshops will be put on permanent display for public consumption. Another prospect is, the aptitude to float and sustain a quarterly or bi-annual publication that will not only document its activities, but also provide additional information on issues related to its area of interest. It is equally expected that the Project’s sustained exploration of waste and found objects as potent creative resources, in addition to opening new windows of aesthetic engagement, will also establish a critical creative framework that cannot be ignored in the discourse on modern Nigerian art.

CONCLUSIONS

According to Ikenegbu (2007), “Creative and artistic imagination involves going beyond what is given, the voluntary generation of some symbolic supplement to our modification of the actual” (p. 7). The life of an artist presupposes a conscious sensitivity to the environment as a potent source of ideas and materials. He is also of the view that “the artist sees more than is given in our ordinary experience of things, and renders the world back to us in some sense with added value” (p. 8). The creative framework on which the Art is Everywhere Project anchors on aligns to the view expressed above. Its emphasis on the use of waste and found objects as the primary resource for artistic engagement goes beyond addressing environmental issues to equally highlight its potentials for economic empowerment and creative fulfillment. Transforming waste and found objects to works of art imbued with new meaning, value and function, requires a fertile imagination and a great deal of artistic freedom. In highlighting the potentials of waste as a viable creative resource, Obeagu (2007) remarked that “A thing out there discarded, abandoned, trashed, anywhere, everywhere, may become the ideal medium for the artist to use and concretize his creative imagination” (p. 25).

It is quite obvious that the various workshops which AIE Project has organized since its inception in 2005 have provided a useful interface between the artist and material resources sourced directly from the environment. The importance of these workshops to the socio-political, environmental and economic development of Nigeria is expressed by Nwafor (2006):

Ayo's workshop did not interrogate art and the environment in the manner of Christo or other American maniac conceptualists. Rather, it examines the Nigerian society in a manner that is profitable, helpful and utilitarian.

Ayo's workshop not only seeks to address the Nigerian society's dirt-syndrome through thought-provoking art concepts, it also addresses it through altruistic socially engaging acts like awareness, information and public consciousness.

Ayo's workshop has an aversion for the injurious practices knifing the environment just as it has a way of questioning our people's notions of art especially in an environment where people's art experience is straightjacket. (p. 2)

The unique formalism and aesthetics which characterized most of the works produced during the workshops are functions of the range and variety of materials explored in the workshops. The creative areas that were engaged in the appropriation of these materials include painting, sculpture, installation art, mixed media exploration, craft making, textiles and fashion designing. While holding the notion that “the Project will continue in the spirit of workshops, to achieve greater heights in artistic development” (Ikenegbu, 2007, 11), Ikenegbu also expressed that the practical application of the Art is Everywhere Project, “represents a logical extension of both realistic and unrealistic tendencies culminating in a process whereby art and artists attain an even greater understanding of their own nature and function” (p.11). The role played by the environment in all this cannot be quantified. The AIE Project has shown that for the perceptive artist, art can be found in unusual places and in the most unlikely common-placed objects.

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